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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BISHKEK 001125

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH AND SPANISH LEAVE MANAS TRANSIT CENTER

REF: BISHKEK 986

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Within a couple of days of each other, both the French and Spanish contingents vacated the Manas Transit Center due to their inability to conclude agreements with the Government of Kyrgyzstan extending authorization for the presence of their military personnel. With the loss of the Coalition partners, the Transit Center is now an American-only operation. The Kyrgyz Foreign Minister told the Ambassador that Kyrgyzstan has been ready to renegotiate the French and Spanish agreements for some time, but that the countries were dragging their feet and not responding to Bishkek's urgent calls for talks. Not surprisingly, the French and Spanish lay blame for the failure to reach agreements at the feet of the Kyrgyz. It looks to us like there is blame enough to go around. END SUMMARY.

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

¶2. (C) On October 7 the French military contingent at the Manas Transit Center departed the Center for a French military base in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The French, anticipating that any future negotiations would be lengthy, later decided to rotate personnel out of Dushanbe for France on October 12. The Spanish military contingent at the Transit Center departed on October 13, leaving behind a small contingent. The Spanish remain hopeful that they will be able to reach an agreement with Kyrgyzstan, while the French seem less positive. With the loss of the Coalition partners, the Transit Center is now solely an American operation.

SPANISH TEAM SEEKS GUIDANCE

¶3. (C) On October 8, Charg and Embassy officers met with the Spanish Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan (based in Astana, Kazakhstan) and a visiting delegation from the Spanish Ministries of Defense and Foreign Affairs to discuss negotiating strategies prior to a meeting with the Government of Kyrgyzstan. The Spanish delegation met with Kyrgyz officials on October 9 to begin negotiations for a new Transit Center agreement covering Spanish military personnel which expired October 13. Unfortunately, and apparently as the result of miscommunication, the Spanish delegation visit occurred while the Foreign Minister, President, and many other relevant officials were out of the country, a fact the Spanish seemed to have been unaware of before their arrival.

14. (C) The Spanish Ambassador expressed frustration at the inability to achieve an agreement with Kyrgyzstan, despite having begun the negotiation process in late August. He had visited Bishkek in early September to discuss a new agreement (and then went on a several week vacation without following up with the government - Reftel). He noted that Spain had requested negotiating dates from the Kyrgyz Foreign Ministry two months earlier and believed that they had done everything in their power to punctually renegotiate an agreement.

SPANISH UNABLE TO REACH KYRGYZ

15. (C) After negotiations on the 9th, the Spanish delegation debriefed Charg. They said that the discussions had been "very tough." Their Kyrgyz interlocutors (mid-level MFA and MOD officials) said that both the Spanish and French should have pursued negotiations from the time of the announcement that the former base would be closed "as the Americans did." They said there could be no interim agreement, as that would require Parliamentary consent, so both countries would need to pull out of the Transit Center until new agreements could be reached. The Spanish reported that they had answered in kind, stating that, unlike the French, they had no feasible local redeployment option and they were uncertain whether, if they had to leave, they would be able to return. The Kyrgyz, apparently, did not respond well to what they took as a threat.

DID THE FRENCH TRY?

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16. (C) Charg discussed with the French Charg and Assistant Defense Attach (the Defense Attach is assigned to Astana) the French effort to renegotiate their agreement with the Kyrgyz. The French and Kyrgyz are still locked in an unproductive game of talking past each other. The French have asked the MFA several times what the Kyrgyz would like out of a new agreement, and the Kyrgyz have responded with the same question. Whereas the Spanish have provided a draft text of an agreement to the Kyrgyz for consideration, the French seem nowhere near to taking that (probably necessary) step.

COMMENT AND RECOMMENDATION

17. (C) The departure of the U.S.'s Coalition partners from the Transit Center may be a result of missed opportunities more than a plan by the Kyrgyz to kick them out. France is still seething at the U.S. for not providing a copy of the U.S.-Kyrgyzstan Transit Center Agreement and may see this process as a mechanism for extricating itself from operations at the Center. The Spanish side appears to have underestimated now that concluding an agreement with the Kyrgyz will be a challenge, but had clearly misread this situation before their visit to Bishkek. The Spanish Ambassador's long vacation in September also contributed to the late start by the Spanish. We believe that the Kyrgyz government feels that Spain and France did not show sufficient respect by not actively seeking negotiations early on and then demanding quick discussions at the last moment. If it is important to the USG that we maintain operations by our coalition partners at the Transit Center, we recommend an approach to both the Spanish and the French in their capitals in order to energize and motivate our partners to reengage in these negotiations. We could do the same thing, in parallel, here.

GFOELLER